



Arthrogram

Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet tells you about an Arthrogram. It explains how the test is done, what to expect, and the risks involved. It is not meant to replace informed discussion between you and your doctor, but can act as a starting point for such a discussion.

What is an Arthrogram?

An Arthrogram is an X-ray examination to look at the internal structures of a joint, including the bones, cartilage, ligaments, joint lining and surrounding muscles and tendons. A small amount of Contrast (X-ray dye) is injected into the joint to visualize the structure and the lining of the joint on X-rays.

What do I have to do before my Arthrogram?

Taking tablets and medicines

There is no dietary preparation for the patient for this procedure. You should continue to take all your normal medication.

Females

Females are asked to contact the Radiology department if you suspect that you may be pregnant OR if the appointment is more than 10 days after the start of your last period. This test uses radiation and there is a risk to the unborn baby if we were to do the X-rays when you are pregnant. When you arrive for your test, you will be asked when your last period started. If it is more than 10 days earlier, your appointment will be postponed.

Allergy to iodine or contrast medium

You should inform us in advance if you have a known allergy to iodine or intravenous contrast material (dye). Your doctor may prescribe medications prior to the examination to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction.

Driving

You are advised to ask someone to bring you to hospital. This procedure can cause numbness in the joint affected for an hour or so afterwards so you should not to drive for a few hours following this test.

Where do I go when I arrive at the hospital?

Please report to the reception desk in the Radiology department with your appointment letter 10 minutes before your appointment time. You will be asked to sit in the waiting area until called by a member of staff.

A member of the team will explain the test and answer any questions. If you have to undress for the procedure, you will be shown to a private cubicle and asked to change into a clean gown. You will be asked to remove all jewellery and metal from the area to be examined. Your clothes and valuables will be secured in a locker until after the procedure.

Can I bring a relative/friend?

You may bring a relative or friend with you to the appointment but, as the examination uses x-rays, for reasons of safety they will not be able to accompany you into the examination room, except in very special circumstances. If the patient is a young child or is un-cooperative, a parent or health worker may stay in the room but will be required to wear a protective lead apron.

If you need an interpreter please tell us when you receive your appointment so that we can arrange this.

What happens during the Procedure?

You will be taken into the screening/fluoroscopy room and asked to lie down on the fluoroscopy table. The fluoroscopy equipment uses x-rays to obtain real-time moving images of the body. A small beam of continuous x-rays passes through the body to an image intensifier, which is suspended over the X-ray table. The sequence of images produced can be viewed on a computer monitor.

The procedure will be performed by a Radiologist, who is a doctor specially trained to carry out complex imaging examinations and to interpret the images. The Radiologist is helped by a Radiographer, who is a professional trained to carry out X-rays and other imaging examinations.

The Radiologist will clean the skin with an antiseptic solution. A local anaesthetic will be injected to numb the skin and soft tissues overlying the joint. A small sterile needle will then be inserted into the joint using x-ray guidance. A small amount of iodine-containing contrast (X-ray dye) will be injected into the joint and x-ray pictures will be taken. You may feel some pressure and fullness in the joint but it should not be painful. The needle will then be removed but the contrast will stay in the joint for a short time.

The examination takes about 30 minutes to complete.

What happens after the test?

At the end of the test the needle is removed and a small dressing applied. You will then be able to leave immediately.

You may experience some swelling and discomfort in the injected joint for 1-2 hours following the procedure. This may be eased with mild analgesics, such as paracetamol, if necessary and should resolve quickly. If the pain persists for more than 24 hours, please consult your GP.

Are there any risks?

Fluoroscopy involves the use of X-rays. There are strict guidelines in place for the use of x-rays in diagnosing medical conditions so fluoroscopic examinations can only be performed at the request of a Doctor. We will keep the radiation dose as low as we possibly can. Women who are or might be pregnant must inform a member of staff in advance.

You may experience slight discomfort during the procedure but it should not be painful.

The injection into the joint is a sterile procedure and the risk of introducing infection is very small.

The risk of serious allergic reaction to the contrast is extremely rare, and radiology departments are well-equipped to deal with this.

Despite these slight risks, your doctor believes it is advisable that you should have this examination, and do bear in mind there are greater risks from missing a serious disorder by not having your scan.

How do I get my results?

The Radiologist will review the images from your Arthrogram and send a report to your doctor. Your GP or hospital Consultant who referred you for the test will see you to discuss the results.

In some cases the Radiologist may discuss the findings with you at the end of the procedure.

Any further questions?

We will do our best to make your visit as comfortable and stress free as possible. If you have any further questions, or suggestions for us, please let us know.

If you would prefer information and advice in another language, please contact the Radiology department.

Further Information

For general information about Radiology departments, visit The Royal College of Radiologists' website: www.goingfora.com

For information about the effects of x-rays read the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) publication: 'X-rays how safe are they?' on the website: http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1194947388410

For health advice or information you can call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit the website: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

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